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OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Annual report of the United Nations Population Fund to the Economic and Social Council

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I. FOLLOW-UP TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 44/211 AND 47/199

1. This report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council decision 1994/33, paragraph 7 (a), which requested the funds and programmes, through their executive boards, to include in their annual reports to the Council, a section outlining measures taken in the implementation of the provisions of the triennial policy review of operational activities.

2. During 1994, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) continued to address relevant elements of resolution 47/199 in all its policy planning, programming and training exercises, including, most notably, those dealing with support for the Resident Coordinator system, the formulation of country strategy notes (CSN); harmonization of programming cycles and procedures; utilization of the programme approach; strengthening of national execution and national capacity building; decentralization; preparation and streamlining of programming guidelines; and training.

3. UNFPA continued to work closely with its United Nations partner agencies and organizations through the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). It also participated in relevant inter-organizational training exercises at both the country and global levels, notably the International Labour Organisation (ILO) International Training Centre in Turin, Italy.

4. In line with the preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), UNFPA served in May 1994 as lead agency for the Turin Centre's 12th Management Coordination Workshop for Senior United Nations Field Representatives. The Executive Director, who is also the current chair of the CCPOQ, was the first executive head of a United Nations organization to give the keynote address to the Management Workshop. She briefed the participants, comprising four inter-agency country teams (Kenya, Ghana, Namibia and Viet Nam), on the preparations for the ICPD and highlighted the importance of population in the preparation of socio-economic development strategies. UNFPA staff collaborated with the Training Centre's staff in integrating population issues into the Turin Centre's curricula.

5. Resident Coordinator system. At the country level, UNFPA Country Directors continued to actively participate in the Resident Coordinator system. UNFPA's staff was fully involved in all coordination processes, such as the country strategy note, the programme approach, the harmonization of programme cycles and procedures and national execution. Furthermore, the Country Directors routinely shared information with United Nations partner organizations on new findings and major policy developments in the population area and chaired field committees dealing with the interrelationship between population and development.

6. Country strategy note. During 1994, UNFPA was an active partner in numerous CSN exercises. By the end of the year, country strategy notes were in various stages of preparation in more than 60 developing countries. In April 1994, UNFPA distributed to all its field staff the guidance document on country strategy notes that had been prepared by the United Nations in consultation with the CCPOQ. UNFPA also advised its staff on how to link the country strategy note to UNFPA's Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) exercises. The UNFPA country programmes for Indonesia and Turkey, approved by the Executive Board in April 1995, reflected the overall population policies and development priorities as set forth in the country strategy notes for those countries. Moreover, UNFPA participated in various consultative committees and thematic cluster groups set up to prepare for the CSN process in, for example, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, the Philippines, Senegal, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Thailand.

7. Harmonization of programming cycles and programming procedures. In a joint letter sent in May 1994, the Deputy Executive Directors of UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA informed the field representatives of the organizations of options for harmonizing programme cycles in countries where this had not yet occurred and of the need to synchronize the programming cycle with the budget cycles and plans of the countries involved. Four JCGP working groups, one for each geographical region (UNFPA is focal point for the Latin America and the Middle East regions), are in charge of monitoring this process. By the end of 1994, some 35 country programmes had been fully synchronized and some 50 others are to be harmonized during the next programming cycle (1996 - 2001). However, the social and political conditions in some 20 countries make the undertaking of the harmonization exercise very difficult.

8. UNFPA participated in the JCGP subgroup that examined ways to harmonize and simplify programme and project policies and procedures. The subgroup decided to build up, systematically, a common approach to specific issues that the JCGP organizations have in common. Another JCGP subgroup considered the issue of payments to government staff and recommended that only in a limited number of countries should projects cover some or all of local costs (for example, for projects related to emergency and humanitarian relief and certain development projects meeting basic needs). Where possible, an exit strategy should be developed in cases where local payment cannot be expected to end immediately.

9. Programme approach. In early 1994, UNFPA field staff took part in eight study missions, organized by the United Nations, to review the programme approach experience in selected countries and to find ways to accelerate progress. The results of these studies were reviewed in April 1994 in an informal inter-agency consultation at the Turin Centre. The degree to which a common interpretation of the programme approach had been implemented was discussed and recommendations were made with regard to practical steps and processes to follow when

promoting and applying the approach. UNFPA's lessons learned from its PRSD exercises served as useful inputs into the consultations.

10. National execution and national capacity building. The inter-agency consultations in April 1994 also reviewed the status of national execution of development projects and found that considerable progress had been made. The consultation concluded, however, that an effective application of the national execution modality was predicated on the existence of adequate institutional, and especially managerial, capacity in a country.

11. In line with UNFPA's policy guidelines on national execution, UNFPA staff are to assess the availability of national expertise before including a component on external technical assistance in a project. During 1994, UNFPA's field offices continued to work closely with national authorities in identifying national expertise as well as in assessing capacities of government institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, to be used in the implementation of population activities. UNFPA Country Support Teams and Country Directors built up rosters of national experts for use as consultants and participants in technical missions and training workshops.

12. While moving increasingly towards national execution, many UNFPA programme activities continued to be jointly executed by the government and a specialized agency of the United Nations or an international NGO in order to transfer state-of-the-art technical advice and technology. In 1994, government-executed projects received a total of $66.4 million in allocations, compared to $21.0 million expended by government-executed projects in 1993.

13. Decentralization. UNFPA's guidelines on decentralization and approval authority of UNFPA Country Directors, revised in 1993, raised the delegated project-approval authority to $750,000, up from $500,000 from 1990-1993 and $250,000 before 1990. In addition, the Fund extended total programme approval authority, on a trial basis, to 12 countries (Algeria, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Honduras, Malawi, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, South Pacific subregion, and Syrian Arab Republic). As a result, 80 per cent of country projects were approved by decentralized approval authority in 1994 compared to 45 per cent in 1993.

14. Training. During 1994, the Fund contributed funding, training advice and population-related expertise to the inter-organizational training exercises at the Turin Training Centre, which eight Country Directors attended, and to various country-level training activities. Some 50 countries, most of them in the Africa region, have established field committees under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator. With the support of curricula and training materials from the Turin Centre and the JCGP working groups, these committees organized or prepared for joint training exercises on such issues as the country strategy note, national execution, national capacity building, HIV/AIDS prevention, Safe Motherhood within the context of reproductive health, and women in development.

15. Evaluation, management audit and aid accountability. Through its participation in the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation, UNFPA was fully involved in the preparation of principles for a monitoring and evaluation methodology in the context of the programme approach. The CCPOQ approved these principles in early 1995. UNFPA also participated in the JCGP Working Groups on Management Audit Systems and Aid Accountability. Common elements and standard auditing practices have been identified, and the possibility of undertaking joint audit of programmes and projects was discussed. Moreover, in 1994 a study on aid accountability was commissioned by the JCGP organizations.

II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

16. This report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council decision 1994/33, paragraph 7 (b), which requested the funds and programmes, through their executive boards, to include in their annual reports to the Council a section on the activities and measures undertaken within the designated theme(s) for the high-level meeting of the operational activities segment.

17. The enthusiasm and sense of mission that came out of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its Programme of Action have had, and will continue to have, a profound effect on the work of UNFPA. In the months since the Cairo conference, translating the Programme of Action into reality has been of critical urgency to the Fund in all of its activities. Initial efforts in achieving this goal have had important implications for UNFPA headquarters, work being carried out in the field, and in the Fund's relations with other agencies and organizations both within and outside of the United Nations system.

18. An important first step in carrying out the Programme of Action was the series of follow-up consultations held at UNFPA headquarters immediately after the ICPD for the Africa, Arab States, Asia and Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions (a similar meeting for Europe is scheduled for early May). These consultations were extremely valuable in providing insights on the differing needs of various countries and regions and in producing practical suggestions for future work. All of UNFPA's country programmes are now being reviewed to align them more closely with the basic principles of the Programme of Action, and field staff are working with governments in reviewing national population policies to ensure that such policies reflect the priorities agreed to at the ICPD.

19. The Fund is reviewing its policy guidelines in the areas of reproductive health and family planning; information, education and communication; gender, population and development; population and sustainable development; and collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Because of the centrality of the concept of fostering a holistic approach to reproductive health, one of the first initiatives in defining new policy guidelines was the convening of an "Expert Consultation on Reproductive Health and Family Planning: Directions for UNFPA Assistance". The participants at this conference focused on ways that UNFPA could increase its emphasis, inter alia, on sexual health and sexual rights, male responsibility for family planning, providing reproductive health information and services to adolescents, prevention of female genital mutilation, quality assurance and programme monitoring, and advocacy in support of reproductive health.

20. UNFPA also convened a series of joint workshops with partner agencies in the United Nations development system to examine how best to carry out the Programme of Action at the country and local levels. These workshops focused on key areas of the Fund's programme -- reproductive health and family planning (with WHO); information, education and communication (with UNESCO and WHO); and population data, policy and research (with ILO). The workshops involved advisers from UNFPA's Technical Support Services/Country Support Team system, including specialists from the respective United Nations agencies and organizations.

21. For the United Nations system as a whole, the importance of the ICPD was underscored by the General Assembly's adoption on 19 December 1994 of resolution 49/128, "Report on the International Conference on Population and Development". Emphasizing the importance of continued and enhanced cooperation and coordination by all relevant organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system and the specialized agencies, the resolution requests these agencies to review and, where necessary, adjust their programmes and activities in line with the Programme of Action and to take appropriate measures to ensure its full and effective implementation. The resolution sets up a three-tiered mechanism for pursuing the intergovernmental follow-up to the ICPD: the General Assembly, as the highest intergovernmental mechanism for policy formulation and appraisal, to organize a regular review of the implementation of the Programme of Action; the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in assisting the General Assembly, to promote an integrated approach and provide system-wide guidance and coordination in monitoring the implementation of the Programme of Action; and a revitalized Population Commission, as the functional commission assisting ECOSOC.

22. Resolution 49/128 contains a provision renaming the Population Commission the "Commission on Population and Development" and provides for it to meet annually instead of bi-annually, starting in 1996. At its meeting in February/March 1995, the Commission on Population and Development submitted a document to ECOSOC outlining its views on the follow-up to the ICPD and prepared "a topic-oriented and prioritized multi-year work programme", as contained in draft report E/CN.9/1995/L.3/Add.1.

23. The ICPD had addressed the issue of a separate Executive Board for UNFPA. The Programme of Action invited the General Assembly to give further consideration to the establishment of such a board. Resolution 49/128 calls upon ECOSOC to consider establishing a separate Executive Board for UNFPA.

24. On behalf of the Secretary-General and at the request of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Executive Director of UNFPA convened and chaired the first meeting of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action on 13 December 1994. Participants included representatives of 12 United Nations and organizations, who worked to establish a common framework for following up on the ICPD. It was decided to use working groups for inter-agency collaboration at the country level in the following areas: (a) a common data system at the national level in the field of health, notably in the areas of infant, child and maternal mortality; (b) basic education, with special attention to gender disparities; (c) policy-related issues, including the drafting of a common advocacy statement on social issues; and (d) women's empowerment. The first of these inter-agency working groups, the one on basic education, was convened on 7 March 1995 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

25. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held its first regular meeting in February/March 1995 to discuss the implications of the ICPD. It underscored the importance of shared responsibility within the United Nations system for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the need for coordination among United Nations agencies and organizations at the country level, through the Resident Coordinator system and the country strategy notes. The ACC also called for increased cooperation and coordination with NGOs.

26. To achieve the goals of the ICPD it will be necessary to mobilize resources from Governments and NGOs. At the request of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNFPA convened a consultation on resource mobilization on 20 January 1995, which made several valuable suggestions. These meetings will take place periodically in the future. An important emphasis of the ICPD was on the role of NGOs. In light of the need to involve NGOs in the successful implementation of the Programme of Action, the Executive Director convened the first meeting of an NGO Advisory Committee on 12-13 April 1995 at UNFPA headquarters.

27. The UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board has met twice since the ICPD to discuss, among the other items in the agenda, the follow-up to the Cairo conference. At the January 1995 session, UNFPA presented an interim report (document DP/1995/8) outlining, in a preliminary manner, the policy and programme directions being taken as a result of the ICPD. At its annual session in June, the Executive Board will consider the Programme priorities and future directions of UNFPA in light of the International Conference on Population and Development, as contained in document DP/1995/25.

28. The Executive Director convened a UNFPA management retreat in February 1995 with the overall theme of "A Time for Change". Participants discussed, inter alia, what the mission of UNFPA should be for the next 10 years; what was UNFPA's comparative advantage vis-a-vis other actors in the population field; how to focus UNFPA's programme on fewer substantive sectors and its limited resources on the countries most in need; and how to collaborate better with others in the United Nations system as well as with bilateral and non-governmental organizations.

29. In order to undertake the task of coordinating UNFPA's own follow-up to the ICPD, the Executive Director established a UNFPA Task Force on ICPD Implementation that became operational on 3 January 1995. The UNFPA Task Force has issued reports on the first meeting of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Implementation of the Programme of Action and of the consultation on resource mobilization. It also prepared a report for the ACC on the role of the United Nations system in the follow-up to the Cairo conference. The Task Force organized the first meeting of the NGO Advisory Committee and the working group on basic education mentioned above and is now working to organize the other three working groups established by the Inter-Agency Task Force.

30. The success of the ICPD was, to a large extent, the result of its inclusiveness -- the sense that all involved felt themselves to be a part of the process and, therefore, part of its outcome. The follow-up to the Cairo conference will expand on these newly established or revitalized partnerships. All parties involved need to do their share in implementing the Programme of Action. UNFPA will work closely with Governments, other United Nations agencies and organizations, multilateral and bilateral organizations, and with NGOs in achieving the goals of the Programme of Action and in making sure that population and gender concerns are firmly placed in the centre of the development debate and activities, the aim of which is to improve the well-being of all people.

III. FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

31. This report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council decision 1994/33, paragraph 7 (b), which requested the funds and programmes, through their executive boards, to include in their annual reports to the Council a section on the activities and measures undertaken within the designated theme(s) for the high-level meeting of the operational activities segment.

32. UNFPA participated in the preparatory activities for the World Summit for Social Development, as well as in the Summit itself. Several UNFPA country offices provided support to selected members of country delegations and representatives of NGOs to attend preparatory activities and the Summit.

33. The Social Summit reinforced the objectives of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). For example, Chapter II of the Social Summit Programme of Action, on eradication of poverty, sets forth certain goals that are consistent with those contained in the ICPD Programme of Action, including those related to access to basic education, life expectancy, and levels of infant and maternal mortality, among others (e.g., paras. 36 (a), (b), (c), (d)). Chapter II calls on Governments, in partnership with all other development actors, to make reproductive health available through the primary health care system to all individuals of appropriate age as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015 (para. 36 (h)). The chapter also says that access to social services should be improved through promoting cooperation among government agencies, health-care workers, NGOs, women's organizations and other institutions of civil society in order to develop a comprehensive national strategy for improving reproductive health care and child health care services and ensuring that people living in poverty have full access to those services (para. 37 (e)).

34. Chapter IV, in addressing the subject of family responsibility, recognizes that helping the family in contributing to social integration should involve promoting equal partnership between women and men in the family. It calls for specific measures, in the context of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, to remove long-standing legal and social barriers to employment, education, productive resources and public services; assist women in becoming aware of and realizing their rights; and ensure the elimination of intra-family discrimination for the girl child, especially in regard to health, nutrition and education (para. 73 (b)). Chapter IV also calls for urgent action to combat violence against women (e.g., paras. 70, 79 (a), 79 (b)), and in particular against female genital mutilation.

35. Immediately following the conclusion of the Social Summit, UNFPA shared with its field and headquarters staff the highlights of the Summit, particularly those elements of the Social Summit Programme of Action that are related to the consensus reached at the ICPD. The Fund will implement all relevant recommendations that are within its mandate and will serve as a strong advocate for recommendations on other population-related social goals, objectives and commitments adopted at Copenhagen. UNFPA will inform the Council of progress made in implementing the recommendations of the World Summit for Social Development.